

Funeral Service for Lt Col RJA Kaulback DSO, 4 June 1996

VALEDICTION

Spoken by his son, Roy.

My father, Lt Col Bill Kaulback, DSO, MA, FRGS died a week ago. In the late afternoon of that day Drusilla, my girlfriend, drew my attention to an eagle, or at least by far the largest hawk I have ever seen in these parts which flew from the south up to the house, and spiralled up into the sky directly over the bedroom where father lay dying. I said at the time, "That's come to escort Dad home"; and two hours later he left us, quietly and without fuss.

Day shall clasp him with strong hands,
And Night shall fold him in soft wings.
For two things have altered not
Since first the world began -
The beauty of the wild green earth
And the bravery of man.

And brave he was - brave and loving. The centre of his life for over half a century had been his great love, his wife, our mother, Fenja. She was his great comfort and strength, and they meant all the world to each other. I'm sure he's waiting, young and whole again, for her. May God grant her the comfort she needs during their temporary separation.

There's a long long trail a-winding
To the land of their dreams
Where the nightingales are singing
And the pale moon gleams
And it's a long long time of waiting
Till their dreams all come true
And they go walking down
That long long trail - they two.

Father came of a long line of soldiers - and he was a true warrior. He evinced a powerful tendency to close with the enemy and kill him. In battle, he won an immediate DSO for leading 3 companions in an assault on a company of battle-hardened German Panzer-Grenadiers. With no loss to his own men, he despatched a dozen or so and pressed his attack home with such force that the other seventy surrendered.

Cry high and bid him welcome to the banquet of the brave
For on their skulls the sword he swung fell shattering from
the skies

The hour when death was like a light and blood was like a rose
You never loved your friends, my friend, as he has loved his
foes.

And he showed such fine qualities throughout his life - the Roman virtues of pietas, gravitas and dignitas (dutifulness, seriousness, and dignity) suffused his character, together with great tenderness and love. He once told me, after I had let him down once again by not adhering to the highest standards, and asked him how he could overlook my error, that a father's love is total.

There are no limits to a father's love;

It's world without end, Amen.

He was one of the last of his kind - a true Christian Gentleman.

If I may once again use the better words of another man:-

Say not the struggle naught availeth

The labour and the wounds are vain,

The enemy faints not nor faileth,

And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;

It may be, in yon smoke concealed,

Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,

And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,

Seem here no painful inch to gain.

Far back, through creeks and inlets making,

Comes silent, flooding in, the main,

And not by eastern windows only,

When daylight comes, comes in the light;

In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,

But westward, look, the land is bright.

His erudition was a delight to all who knew him; lightly worn, and leavened with enormous humour, it helped him to a deep understanding of his fellow men, and to the accomplishment of great things. A Colonel at 31, he retired from the army in 1947 to become an oil-man. The pinnacle of this second career was the construction of the massive oil terminal at Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf. Completed, of course, under budget and on time, it was the largest civil engineering project of its day. Even in his sixties he was a force of nature: when one of his children was threatened by three loutish motorcyclists, grown men, he waded into them with such power that he only had to hit one of them, the leader, once: Father shattered the man's face with a disdainful backhanded blow. He was strong for his loved ones, terrible to bullies, and ever gentle to the weak and small. Dogs and children adored him.

I still cannot conceive of a world without him: certainly it will be a poorer, dimmer place.

Wisdom requires intelligence, education, experience and greatness of spirit; all of these, he had in full measure. He was the best man I have ever met, or ever will.

So, Old Father -

Lie you easy, dream you light,
And sleep you fast for aye;
And happy may you find the night
As joyful you made the day.

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And - as his mortal remains were incinerated, storms lashed the land, marking the passage of the Valkyries riding across the sky. Signs and portents at the death of heroes.